DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 060 RC 024 075

AUTHOR Schramm-Pate, Susan

TITLE Rural Resistance to Higher Education: In Search of a Better Way.

PUB DATE 2002-00-00

NOTE 41p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies Association (Pittsburgh, PA, October 30-November 3, 2002).

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Black Education; College Preparation; *College School Cooperation; Educational Attitudes; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Programs; Government School Relationship; *Intergroup Relations; *Power Structure; *Resistance (Psychology); *Rural Schools

IDENTIFIERS Foucault (Michel); United States (South)

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes rural school resistance to a federally funded intervention program aimed at increasing college attendance and success among students from historically marginalized groups. One such program ("Start Up") is currently being implemented in a geographically isolated South Carolina school district with high minority (African American and Latino) enrollment. The program takes place through a school-university partnership and provides an academic enrichment curriculum for low-income and minority middle-school students, designed to get them interested in and ready for college. University staff involved in program implementation have encountered uncooperative behaviors and other forms of resistance from local educators. The key challenge for rural school-urban university partnerships is to preserve the advantages of rural schools (small scale and close community ties) while enabling them to prepare students for higher-skill jobs. Understanding the patterns and types of resistance from this rural school community and the relationship of this resistance to the power and influences of urban higher education institutions and government agencies is critical to improving and sustaining the partnership. Analysis focuses on power relations and resistance to power, which Foucault claims are ever-present and intertwined, including historical patterns of power and social control in the South and in rural areas in general, and outsider efforts (such as Start Up) to "fix" and "normalize" rural schools and children to be more like their urban and suburban counterparts. (Contains 27 references) (SV)

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RC RCTR 0019

ED 476 060

Rural Resistance to Higher Education: In Search of a Better Way

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies Association (AESA) 2002

Submitted to ERIC April 10, 2003

By:
Susan Schramm-Pate, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
University of South Carolina
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership & Policies
Columbia, SC 29208
803.888.3088 (voice)
803.888.3090 (fax)
sschramm@gwm.sc.edu

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Abstract

In this paper a school district in a geographically remote area of the South is used to illustrate some of the problems encountered in educational reform in rural America, e.g., isolation, recruiting and keeping certified teachers, limited resources, increasing demands for accountability, low expectations, and lack of leadership. There is a very noticeable gap between the educational achievements of southern rural students versus that of their urban and suburban counterparts whether we consider school readiness, standardized test scores, or access to higher education. As a result, rural southern youth (particularly youth of color) are less likely to be academically prepared to attend post-secondary institutions compared with their urban and suburban counterparts. Recognizing this, the federal government and some state governments provide support for several intervention programs aimed at significantly raising the numbers of historically marginalized groups who enter and succeed in post-secondary institutions. One such program for seventh grade students is currently being realized in a geographically isolated rural region of the South. It takes place through a school-university partnership and can be characterized as an academic enrichment curriculum for low-income and minority middle school students designed to get them interested in and ready for post-secondary education. My work with this particular program, that I shall refer to in this paper as Project START UP,[1] is rife with power and resistance to power that Michael Foucault claims is ever present and intertwined. A Foucaultian analysis of knowledge, power, and resistance frames this investigation and therefore assumptions include: 1) *all* human beings have knowledge; 2) power *acts* on human beings; 3) power and resistance to power are *inextricably linked*; and 4) power and resistance to power *intersect*; and 5) power is not hierarchical (flowing from the top down) but everywhere and *local*. The purpose of this analysis is to better understand the challenges of operating, and supporting this particular program into the future since a deeper understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of this isolated, rural school district and its community is vital in order for this particular partnership to be improved and sustained.

[1] START UP is a fictional name for a large federal grant program (with a 40% state match) designed to significantly increase the number of students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education by creating school-university partnerships. The program can be characterized as a hands-on academic enrichment program for low-income and minority students designed to get them interested in and ready for college. The researcher is also the primary investigator (PI) for the extramural funded START UP and serves as Project Director. Her goals for her program include: 1) Nurturing a love for learning; 2) Encouraging students to graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary educational opportunities; 3) Delivering to students well-rounded academic programs; 4) Proving appropriate non-academic programs to students such as community-building, team-building, organizational skills, and study skills; 5) Assisting students and parents in applying to an appropriate postsecondary institution; 6) Demystifying the barriers that prevent access to post-secondary educational opportunities; 7) Exposing students to tangible role models who are successful in the business world; and 8) Revealing to students myriad employment and educational opportunities.

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Introduction

All over the South, the physical landscape is changing to accommodate industrial and population surges. Whereas forests receded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to make way for cotton and tobacco fields, today, the fields are receding to make way for gated community subdivisions of single-family homes, condominium complexes, and identical strip malls anchored with goliath Wal-Mart Super Centers and Lowes Home and Garden stores and, most significantly, colossal manufacturing complexes. Between 1994 and 1996, exports of South Carolina goods increased by 22% mainly because of the heavy manufacturing of consumable goods such as BMW sport utility vehicles, BOSE stereo components, Michelin tires, and CISCO systems software that are generated out of high-tech plants in urban and suburban areas.

Companies such as these invest hundreds of millions of dollars and create thousands of jobs that pay an average production wage of 15-20 dollars an hour. In the mid 1990s, South Carolina's government officials expressed concerned that rural areas would "miss out" on the next period of explosive growth. As a response, they put together enterprise zone incentive packages filled with government subsidies designed to attract companies to rural areas of South Carolina. These mega project incentive packages typically include property tax abatements, sales tax exemptions, land acquisition and preparation (e.g., water and sewer lines, electric transmission lines, etc.), infrastructure improvements (e.g., railroad track construction, road improvements, etc.), and have few environmental strings attached to wetlands mitigation, soil testing, and endangered species protection.

For example, the Rural Development Act of 1996 under the leadership of then South Carolina Governor David Beasley, was premised on a Republican pro-business model and the idea that South Carolina needed a strong workforce to meet corporate needs. According to the legislature, the "Act" arose from the technological innovations of the new information age as more contemporary forms of work organization and production technologies were adopted in rural firms across the country.

South Carolina competes with other southern states such as Georgia and North Carolina to attract to its rural areas foreign and domestic businesses that plan to move production off shore or to create new plants. The "Act" designated the entire state of SC as an "enterprise zone" and was aimed at preparing the workforce for more high-tech jobs and jobs more global in scale. Big business was promised that the rural workforce would receive specialized training to compete in the high-tech markets and were offered reasons to come to S. C. and stay. In addition to mega tax incentives, potential businesses were promised a hardworking southern populace made further attractive by their anti-union sentiments.

Of course, schools (both P-12 and post-secondary institutions) are the vehicles necessary to provide the specialized training to keep the workforce prepared for today's technology-driven society. The strategy to convince industry to locate in the rural South is complex since in addition to new infrastructures and tax incentives, big business also demands certain cultural attractions for expatriates and northerners who integrate rural southern areas to run these big plants. These company executives request theaters, restaurants, and good public schools for their children. The paradox is often fiscally poor

communities stay poor without these large plants since industry drives the property tax-base that supports the school districts.

The rural schools have previously been successful at grooming workers for jobs in the lower and middle ranges of skill distribution such as farming and work in low-tech factories and cotton mills, but the needs of industries producing goods such as automobiles and electronics often require more advanced education. Several large federal grants designed to increase curricular concentrations of math, science, and language arts, are in response to the move from an industrial age economy to the technology driven information age of the twenty first century. The money is closely tied to accountability measures in the form of standardized test scores to ensure enough students graduate high school and gain entrance to post-secondary institutions to supply the human resources to comply with industry's needs.

Rural areas in particular are targeted since research shows schools in remote areas often have specific weaknesses such as lack of strong leadership, specialization, and certified teaching staffs. Compared with southern urban and suburban youth, many southern rural youth (particularly people of color) are less likely to be academically (and financially) prepared to graduate high school and gain access to higher education.

Many "new economy" organizations and technologies do not require workers to hold four-year degrees. The largest share of jobs coming to the South in the near future are often seen as requiring a level of education beyond high school, but short of a bachelor's degree. Although rural students may not need a baccalaureate to complete in the new economy, they are encouraged to attend post-secondary institutions with an academic program component such as a two-year community college. Thus, school

reform in the South often focuses on ensuring proficiency in reading, writing, and computation skills and the ability of workers to apply those skills in a computer-based environment.

Since the Rural Development Act of 1996, the past seven years have emerged as a critical moment for many rural labor markets in the South. Computer use in the workplace has accelerated and rural firms appear to be adopting high-tech production and management methods at about the same rate as urban and suburban firms. In many areas, rural labor markets are also becoming more like urban and suburban ones in the education requirements for local jobs.

Regional findings suggest educational outcomes in the rural South are worse than other areas of the United States.[2] A recent study of rural education examined rural workforce preparation and readiness and compared it against urban conditions and the changing needs of rural employers.[3] Researchers found that southern rural schools fell below average on a wide range of quality measures. For example, one of the strengths of rural schools overall is the high marks that teachers give their work environment. Yet this is exactly where southern rural teachers appear to differ. Their pay is low, even for rural schools and more importantly, they report less satisfaction with many dimensions of their environment: salaries, resource availability, class size, teaching as a career, and the level of problems in the learning environment.[4] As for performance, rural southern student test scores fall below the levels of other regions of the South. Rural southern

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[2] R. M. Gibbs, "The Challenge Ahead for Rural Schools." *Forum for Applied Research and Public Policy*, Spring 2000 v15 i1 p. 82.
[3] R. M. Gibbs, P.L. Swaim, and R. Teixeria, eds., *Rural Education and Training in the New Economy: The Myth of the Rural Skills Gap* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1998).
[4] D. Ballou and M. Podursky. "Rural Teachers and Schools," In R. Gibbs et al., *Rural Education and Training in the New Economy.*

educational attainment is also lower including rates of high school graduation and college attendance.

The Rural South: A Cheap Supply of Labor

Jonathan Sher has argued for decades that when industries need a supply of cheap labor they locate in rural areas and actively recruit local people.[5] Rural people are valued only to the extent that they are useful to the wealthy and powerful and when they no longer represent the best bargain available, they are treated as expendable. For Sher, our society as a whole puts the pursuit of profit and power ahead of the needs of people. The national priority has been to exploit both the natural and human resources of rural America in order to enhance the status of the already rich and powerful. In other words, the "powers that be" do not care about the well-being of rural people and so we should not expect them to care about rural children and rural schools.

Ironically, although, rural schools have recently been viewed as out of touch with contemporary society because of their lack of strong leadership, geographic isolation, small enrollments and lack of specialization, there is much is the educational literature on community building today that advocates larger urban schools mimic rural school attributes such as small school size and close ties with the local community.[6]

Sher identified some unique features of rural schools that he felt defied quantitative analysis or statistical description.[7] Among these features are: 1) slower pace

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[5] Jonathan P. Sher. Bringing Home the Bacon: The Politics of Rural School Reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, Volume 65, Number 4, December 1983, pp. 289-283.

[6] Please see Theodore Sizer, *Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High* School (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996); and Thomas J. Sergiovanni, *Building Community in Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994); and Paul Theobald, *Teaching the Commons: Place, Pride, and the Renewal of Community* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

[7] J.P. Sher (Ed.). *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988).

and less pressured environment; 2) a spirit of cooperation; 3) more opportunities for leadership and development; and 4) less formal interaction among students, staff, and parents. Within the context of attracting and recruiting teachers to small rural schools, Dunne delineates several strengths of small rural schools.[8] Among these virtues are opportunities are: 1) small instructional unit size; 2) individualized instruction; 3) fewer interpersonal and organizational problems; 4) knowing each child as an individual; 5) approaching problems without the generalized policies; 6) greater student and parent participation in school and school activities; and 8) heterogeneity of social class. Discussions of rural schools inevitably include references to comparisons with urban and suburban schools, which have of course received the majority of attention in the literature on school reform for at least the last four decades. For instance, in the eighties Paul Nachtigal constructed a binary opposition of what he identified as the basic differences and/or characteristics between rural and urban communities/schools.[9]

Rural	**Urban**
Personal/tightly linked	Impersonal/loosely coupled
Generalists	Specialists
Homogeneous	Diverse
Non bureaucratic	Bureaucratic
Verbal Communication	Written Memos
Who said it?	What's said
Time measured by seasons	Time measured by clocks
Traditional values	Liberal values
Entrepreneur	Corporate labor force
Make do/Respond to environment	Rational planning to control environment
Self-sufficiency	Problem solving left to experts
Poorer (less spendable income)	Richer (more spendable income)
Less formal education	More formal education
Smaller/less density	Larger/greater density

[8] F. Dunne. Choosing Smallness: An Examination of the Small School Experiences in Rural America. In J.P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988, pp. 81-124).

[9] Paul M. Nachtigal (Ed.). *Rural Education: In Search of a Better Way*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982, p. 280).

Until recently, rural southern schools tended to remain isolated from the educational, governmental, and economic support systems found in more densely populated metropolitan areas of the state. When assistance from universities and government agencies was available, it tended to be aimed at "rescuing" or "fixing" the rural schools, teachers, and children to be more like their more successful urban and suburban counterparts.

The key challenge for rural school-urban university partnerships is to be able to work with the school district while preserving its competitive advantages—small scale and close community ties—while enabling them to better prepare students for the higher skill jobs that are inevitably coming to the rural South. Understanding the patterns and types of resistance from this rural school community and its relationship to the power and influences of urban higher education institutions and governmental agencies is critical to not only understanding how to improve the partnership, but also how to sustain it in the future.

Analyzing Rural Resistance through a Foucaultian Frame

Over the last four years, I have come to see my hard work with a federally funded grant program that I refer to in this paper as Project "START UP" as doing very little to influence the possibilities of change in a geographically isolated rural school district in South Carolina. Society's rules are very difficult to change and yet it is still quite unsettling to realize that large federal grant programs aimed at people of color and the working class poor typically do more to stabilize existing power relations then to change them.

Michel Foucault's work is about reversing the systems that quietly order us about, that normalize us, and the power that functions in a society and makes us function. In his analysis of power, Foucault insists that political resistance to power is not only possible; it is an inevitable and necessary part of the power relation equation. If there was no resistance there would be no power relations because it would simply be a matter of obedience. Resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process and power relations are obliged to change with the resistance.

Foucault's notion that resistance and tension is inherently part of the relationship between power and knowledge and that resistance does not exist outside of the system of power relations, is useful in an analysis of rural resistance to large federally funded education grants like START UP that are designed for people who don't live up to society's idea of normality. Following Foucault, we can think of START UP as a normalizing system of control. That is to say, the administrators, teachers, and children of this particular rural county would not need the program if they were a "normal" school district, but because they are divided and identified as "abnormal" for reasons such as low standardized test scores, low socioeconomic status, and high rates of leaving school early, they need a system of control that will get them defined as "normal." Once this is accomplished—if it ever is accomplished—they will no longer need the controlling power system. In the meantime, as long as START UP tightly controls aspects of their school life, according to Foucault, the rural school personnel and students will continue to resist the power and tensions will abound.

What is viewed as "uncooperative behavior" by the facilitators of the federal grant is for Foucault political resistance to power systems. For examples, the rural school's

teachers and administrators go past deadlines to provide test score data—they may "forget" to mail the test results—they "forget" to return phone calls or emails, or they show up late to unlock the school building for a START UP Saturday School. To Foucault, the START UP program makes them believe they are being controlled and so they continually resist the controlling and normalizing power relations. It is viewed as an indictment of their teaching performances because, after all, they wouldn't need a government funded remediation program if they were doing their jobs in the first place.

Foucault looked at the ways in which discursive systems impact disciplines such as the social sciences making his work very useful for researchers in the contemporary field of educational and curriculum studies. In his exceptional historical critique of modern Western society, Foucault argued that the rise of government institutions and of new notions of political liberty corresponded with a darker counter movement, by the surfacing of a new and unprecedented discipline directed toward turning human beings into "objectified subjects." For Foucault there are "three modes of objectification of the subject" including: 1) dividing practices; 2) scientific classification; and 3) subjectification.[10] As Rabinow writes:

> Taken together, the three modes of objectification of the subject (those that categorize, distribute, and manipulate; those through which we have come to understand ourselves scientifically; those that we have used to form ourselves into meaning-giving selves) designate the problematic of Foucault's inquiries. . . . Clustered tightly around the problem of the subject are the twin terms of power and knowledge.[11]

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[10] Paul Rabinow, (ed.) Introduction to *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 3-29.
[11] Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, p. 12.

The first mode involves dividing people through control, scientific classification, and containment using the combined procedures of power and knowledge.[12] Reform and progress are often used to justify these dividing practices where groups have varying degrees of power and are given an identity. Schools for example, have historically tracked, sorted, and classified students into different levels and types of programs according to age and other pseudo scientific indicators such as intelligence, ability, race, social class, gender, religion, and ethnicity. Dividing practices in schools make subjects into victims that get caught in the processes of objectification and restraint—most obviously the case for special education students or poor working class students.

In the third mode of objectification of the subject referred to as subjectification, Foucault looks at ways in which a human being turns him or herself into a subject, that is to say, the person is active in the process of self-formation. In contemporary America, educational researchers often employ generic models or general principles to evaluate existing conditions in school communities, but Foucault claims that it is exactly this emphasis, this "will to knowledge," that is problematic and leaves us mystified about the concrete functioning of power in Western societies.[13]

Following Foucault, the objective of an educational researcher then is not to construct a sort of utopian school community but instead to ask how power operates in our local and particular school community. "It seems to me," Foucault explains, "that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the

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[12] See Foucault's books, *Madness and Civilization*; *Birth of the Clinic*; and *Discipline and Punish*. In these works he analyzes the way certain populations such as lepers in the Middle ages or vagabonds in seventeenth century Paris were divided into categories that get translated into normal and pathological.

political . . . which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked . . ."[14] His basic metaphor is one of struggle, not conversation, and the point of engaging in struggles—which for Foucault we are constantly engaged in—is to alter power relations. Plus, knowledge is intertwined in both the conflict of minor and major power struggles that are involved in our work.

For Foucault, over the last two centuries new forms of power that are much more subtle than traditional Western notions of power as a monolithic, hierarchical, and clearly visible entity such as laws or religious taboos have developed. These new methods of power involve the normalization of subjects by control rather than by the types of punishment or physical force that were used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and are therefore much more subtle and easier to overlook and much harder to resist. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault translates right and wrong, and good and sin into normal and pathological.

By refusing to separate knowledge from power, Foucault's methodology is to locate historically and analyze the strands of discourse and practices dealing with the subject, knowledge, and power. In this way, we can work toward fulfilling our obligations of searching for the truth and telling the truth. Within a Foucaultian analysis, the task of reconceptualizing schooling in rural American and sustaining a post modern emancipatory curriculum that is consistent with notions of "the good," requires the tricky and dangerous task of engaging in political struggles and revealing certain truths. I say dangerous, because the truth is not always something that the power bloc wants revealed nor that the general public wants to hear. The state holds the purse strings they want

[13] Michel Foucault, in "Human Nature: Justice versus Power," in *Reflexive Water: The Basic Concerns of Mankind*, ed. Fons Elders (London: Souvenir Press, 1984), pp. 140, 160.

"happy stories" to take back to tax payers who ultimately fund programs such as START UP[15] (keep giving money because see we are making a difference). If we admit that particular grant money is not making a difference in the lives of kids, we run the risk of losing the federal dollars and our programs and since jobs are at stake it often puts people are in a position whereby they are dependent on the status quo.

Foucault envisions the state as a kind of political power that basically ignores individuals and looks mainly at the interests of particular classes or groups of citizens. The "the art of government" is the state's most economical way of managing individuals, goods, and wealth within a society. For Foucault, the "art of government" combines with statistics (i.e., empirical knowledge of the state's resources and condition) to form the major components of his "new political rationality."[16]

Foucault is also highly suspicious of universal truths, which is consistent with the postmodern project. Postmodern curricular theorists such as Patrick Slattery, often oppose school curriculum that "promotes domination of nature, mastery of external knowledge, preparation for a distant and predestined future, and mere endurance in a god-forsaken world."[17] And yet, it would seem that the work of START UP is just that—to prepare students who otherwise would not go to college for a distant and predestined

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[14] Ibid., p. 181.

[15] The resources for our particular START UP grant are used to hold 18 Saturday Schools during the academic school year and a three-week camp in the summers. These meetings are supposed to provide *academic* (e.g., mathematics, science, technology, and language arts) and *personal* (e.g., organizational skills, team-building skills, and study skills) enrichment opportunities for 7th and 8th grade students in caring educational environments. 7th grade students attend 20 Saturday School sessions and the 3-week summer camp. 8th graders, who participated in the program as 8th graders, meet for 5 Saturday Schools and serve as mentors for the 7th graders. Five of the 18 Saturday Schools are dedicated to field trips which include two visits to the South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, as well as visits to area college campuses and cultural centers. For rising 8th graders, we hold a two-week summer camp, with one week of non-residential attendance required in Magnolia County and two weeks of residential attendance required on the university campus. The money allotted to our START UP program originally totaled approximately $200,000 per year, but the budget for 2002-2003 was cut to $130,00.

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future, a cog in the capitalist wheel. Does this mean that the START UP project is antithecal to postmodern conceptions of schooling? Possibly since for Foucault, the aim of disciplinary technology that exists in settings such as schools is to forge a "docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved."[18] The idea that rural people have been used by industry has been well situated by rural researchers such as Sher and Theobald.

Southern Peccadilloes

In this age of transition to high-tech industry, government officials often associate the state's economic success with closing the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites. Educational buzzwords are linked to "accountability" for both teachers and students and include plans for early childhood education programs, teacher quality improvement initiatives, increased technology in schools, and parental involvement.[19] For example an analysis published in 2001, *Report of the African-American Student Achievement Committee and Workgroups*, funded by the South Carolina Department of Education, was the result of the governors and state superintendent's efforts to "ensure a world-class system of public education for African American students while setting high standards and providing support and encouragement for these students to reach high standards."[20] The committee and workgroups were tasked with developing innovative strategies for closing the gap including: 1) identification of the factors embedded within

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[16] Michel Foucault, "On Governmentality" (1988), *Ideology and Consciousness*, No. 6 (Autumn 1989), pp. 8, 10.
[17] Patrick Slattery. "Toward an Eschatological Curriculum Theory," in William F. Pinar (Ed.). *Contemporary Curriculum Discourses: Twenty Years of* JCT (New York: Peter Lang, 1999). p. 286.
[18] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1985; New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 198.
[19] In South Carolina, Governor Jim Hodges's and State Superintendent, Inez Tenebaum's early childhood education program is called "First Steps" and is aimed at improving first grade readiness.
[20] South Carolina Department of Education. "Report of the African-American Student Achievement Committee and Workgroups." Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Department of Education. May, 2001, 2.

race, class and cultural differences that impact student achievement; 2) promotion of family and community involvement in the education of students through active participation; and 3) improvement of the overall effectiveness of teachers and staff in addressing the achievement of African American students.

Several researchers focus on teacher role models as the primary strategy for decreasing the achievement gap while recognizing that it is not always possible to have a person of color teach in a school where the majority of students are of color. Most agree that we need to do a better job at enabling teachers to understand lifestyles, interests, attitudes that may be different from their own. For example, Johnson and Johnson note "Any teacher who demonstrates cognitive and humanistic skills, understands students, and works toward causing them to become motivated to want to learn can become successful when teaching any students."[21] While others argue that specific behaviors typically associated with students of color such as noise makers, bad attitude, fighting, peer pressure, talking back and so forth, must be understood within the context of the culture. Clearly many teachers with "white, middle-class mentality" need help with activities that enable students of color to be hands on, active engagement, involved parents and guardians and developing thinking and writing skills and meeting the needs of students of color for competition in the classroom.

Quindlen [22] interviewed principals of schools where gaps among Black and Whites are narrowing and found that getting to know the students was the key to focusing on their individual needs. Smaller schools are praised as efficacious for improving

[21] S. O. Johnson and V. J. Johnson. *Motivating Minority Students: Strategies that Work*. (Springfield, IL.: Thomas Books, 1988, 48).

community relations that in turn help manage student behavior through the implementation of pedagogical practices such as direct instruction, and pedagogy that focuses on reading strategies that are critical to success. Heterogeneously grouping students as giving them books to keep, involving parents and guardians through strong communication tactics, recognizing students, and providing training sessions. Teacher expertise is also cited as an important factor for achievement gains—teachers need strong staff development programs, collegiality, coaching, principals in the classrooms, and must be willing to provide extra help for lagging students. Quindlen notes that one principal observed that when a caring adult encourages students, their achievement can defy the odds. Williams asserts that teachers must understand students' different backgrounds and that there are cognitive patterns that are inherent to differing cultures and that teachers need to form strong relationships with their minority students and celebrate diversity (rather than obscuring it) and increase expectations for students of color.[23]

Magnolia County

Today, the need for a START UP school-university partnership is most acute since in the county our program serves (which I refer to in this paper as Magnolia County) is one of the most impoverished areas in the southeast. The region with a population today of 35,466, experienced heavy population out migration and unemployment with the decline in farming and textile industries in recent decades. Magnolia County is currently experiencing an 18% unemployment rate, which is more

[22] T. H. Quindlen. "Reaching Minority Students: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap." *Education Update*, 44(5), 1-8.

than three times the national average. The parent surveys we have administered in the Magnolia school district show one-third to 40% do not have a work telephone number.

The closing of a large candy plant and a large cotton mill several years ago put many of the county's residents out of work and despite the Rural Development Act of 1996 there is still a lack of industry or virtually any employment for that matter, in the immediate vicinity of the two communities within the Magnolia County that our START UP grant serves besides the farming of soybeans, cotton, and other crops that seldom yield a profit.

As a result, opportunities for work outside the communities are better, but are still limited. Many parents work in the only jobs they can get on the local posh beach resort or late shifts in factories. Parents leave early in the morning for the menial jobs in the hotels and restaurants of the beach resort leaving children to shuffle off to school and return unattended, resulting in a latch-key-kid crisis. Moreover, once at the beach, the Magnolia residents see how the affluent live and they know that where these people come from the schools are better, the jobs are better paying, and few go wanting.

Magnolia's population is 69.6% African American and there is a growing influx of Cuban Americans and Mexican Americans who are becoming permanent residents. Many of the students in the school district will be first generation college students and need all the opportunities and support available to reach their full potential. Magnolia ranks at or near the bottom of the state's forty-six counties in such critical quality-of-life indicators as per capita income ($18,000), and average family income ($16,000) and ranks very high in children living in single parent families below the poverty level (43%).

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[23] B. Williams. *Closing the Achievement Gap: A Vision for Changing Beliefs and Practices.* (Alexandria, VA: American Supervision & Curriculum Development, 1996).

The percentage of Magnolia children eligible for free and reduced lunch is also high (88%) as are students classified as minority (92%). Sadly, the county ranks first in the state in violent teen deaths, fifth in the child death rate, and seventh in the infant mortality rate.

As for performance such critical indicators as reading (literacy) and math (computation skills), Magnolia County middle-school students' standardized test scores fall well below the levels of other regions in the nation. Statistics indicate that African American and other minority children in particular have difficulty performing well on standardized measures. For example, in 2002, 82% of white males and 86% of white females in the 8th grade scored above standards on the state's Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) in math, while only 49% of African American and other minority males and 56% of African American and other minority females scored above standards. And for reading, in 2002, 80% of white males and 82% of white females in the 8th grade scored above standards on the PACT test while only 41% of African American and other males and 55% of African American and other females scored above standards.

In 1999, school districts all over South Carolina were competing for START UP START UP partnerships with institutions of higher education when the 2 million dollar per year federal grant was initiated. Ten partnerships in all were established by the CHE to the serve the state's neediest areas over a period of five years. Magnolia County asked for one of the ten partnerships and qualified since the school community suffers from a lack of economic development, limited resources, and low standardized test scores.

The Magnolia school district's administrative staff, teaching staff, and parents/guardians were consulted at length prior and throughout the origin of the

partnership. Although we did not immediately characterize the early struggles of implementing our START UP program in a rural school district as "resistance" on the part of the school community, it is now obvious that throughout all of the early joint planning efforts with the district, there was an undercurrent of resistance to what was perceived as the authority of the university and the government agencies funding the project.

Examples of Resistance

At the beginning of the partnership, the U. S. Department of Education required each partnership to show a planned curriculum for the academic school year including the Saturday Schools and the summer camp. START UP teachers and the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum "resisted" providing requisite lesson plans aligned with the S. C. math and science state standards. It later came to light that the school district did not have a graded course of study on record and they perceived our asking for a curriculum as criticizing their way of doing things. They were able to produce a pre-fabricated curriculum from the early nineties, but there had been no effort on the part of the school district to write a curriculum that was aligned to the S. C. state standards and/or specific to the needs of the Magnolia students. We asked for the lesson plans to satisfy the federal government but we had no way of knowing that the Magnolia school personnel perceived us as "experts" and viewed our asking for a set planned curriculum on paper as a threat to their way of doing things. Therefore, when they reacted to our requests with lethargic foot-dragging, we were not only confused, but frustrated as well.

In another example, students "resisted" taking the ACT Explore standardized pre-tests and post-tests. Resistance manifested itself in a variety of forms, either student did

not attend START UP classes on the Saturdays in which the tests were to be administered or they "bubbled in" answers on the "scant Ron" sheets quickly and arbitrarily without reading the questions. Years of being represented in the media as inferior and lagging behind other states on standardized tests has created a culture of children (and parent/guardians and teachers) in South Carolina who simply do not take the tests seriously. In yet another example, administrators, counselors and curriculum coordinators "resisted" providing the program's statistician with START UP student data such as grades, promotions to the 6th, 8th and 8th grade and demographics such as race and gender. The implications of this resistance is that administrators do not want to release data that may be used to label them as "underperforming" in the media such as the release of the South Carolina Education Accountability Act's school and district "report cards" that publish information rating schools from "Excellent to Failing." Administrators hesitated and claimed that they "had sent it" or that they "forgot and will get to it," or that they "didn't get the email," or that they "are asked to wear so many hats in a small district that they are just too busy to respond." Moreover, they made excuses for teachers who are abusive, insubordinate, and conniving because teachers are so hard to come by in rural areas; especially teachers who are certified to teach secondary math and science.

The federal government requires this information for sustained funding and yet it was (and still is) nearly impossible to attain this information in a timely and organized manner. As a result, we have spent incalculable amounts of time and significant amounts of money over the last three years, begging, bribing, and coercing Magnolia schools into compliance with the requirements of the START UP grant.

After the second year, my implementation team was essentially ready to write off the partnership with Magnolia Schools as a bad investment. Other school districts in the state were begging for START UP partnerships and it seemed reasonable to partner with a school district that was more willing to comply with the rules and regulations. So, instead of giving up on the partnership (and the children of Magnolia), my Program Coordinator and I began to re-conceptualize within the complexity of the particular social phenomenon in Magnolia County and within the literature on rural, southern schools, a research strategy that might improve our START UP program and strengthen our partnership and sustain funding to this impoverished school district.

Library research revealed our experiences in Magnolia to be consistent with some of the most common problems that rural schools have historically shared and that remain largely unsolved today including: reducing student nonenrollment and absenteeism; recruiting and sustaining highly competent teaching and administrative staffs; providing special education and other specialized services such as counseling, after-school programs, and nursing; securing needed capital and operating funds; compensating for the inherent isolation and population sparsity; and educational attainment (both high school and higher education).

Persistent "Southern" Stereotypes

Rural areas in the South are both romanticized in the contemporary media as places long gone but fondly remembered, and distorted through images of lazy, simple-minded, provincial, country-folk. Some of the recent research on rural schools paints a portrait of *laizsse faire* parents and guardians who not only worry about the quality of

their schools but expect the schools to educate their children for the future, wherever that may lead—city or farm, nearby or far away. Other research bemoans the fact that rural educators receive little support and encouragement and there is an attitude manifest in the actions of policy makers that second-rate schooling is good enough for rural children. While still other studies tout rural parents and schools as more heavily involved with their communities and thus, rural children's educations, than their urban and suburban counterparts.

In any case, beyond, the conflicting reports in the literature and the damaging stereotypes that are perpetuated in the popular press, several characteristics including economic instability, geographic isolation, lack of a unified political identity, and historic migration patterns, continue to impact rural America schooling.

Sher discussed the myths related to economy, efficiency, and equality, which presumably result from consolidation and large schools noting, "Rural America is far too heterogeneous and complex to be amendable to simplistic definitions or comfortable stereotypes."[24] He cited three implications that are critical to the formation of rural programs and policies.[25] The first, "primacy of local circumstance," suggests policy makers be sensitive to local traditions, customs, conditions, and values if their programs are to be successful. Rural schools, like rural America as a whole, are distinguished by their diversity. Some are considered excellent by nearly any standard, while others are sadly inadequate and desperately in need of assistance. Sher's notion of "the primacy of

[24] Jonathan P. Sher (1988) (Ed). Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press). 1-2.
[25] Ibid., 2.

local circumstance" reveals the inadequacy of treating all rural school districts as if they were a "unified, monolithic entity."[26]

Sher also pointed to the fact that rural areas often have little political muscle because of the historical trend of balkanization among regional, racial, ethnic, economic, and occupational groups in rural areas as inhibiting broad-based constituencies, thus causing rural America to equal "far less than the sum of its parts."[27] He argued that the tendency of the Census Bureau and statistical researchers to define "rural" as any area that is not "urban" renders definitions of rural America as "population-based and arbitrary." As a result, diametrically opposing metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas suggests that the more vital sector of our economy resides in the more heavily populated urban and suburban areas and that areas with low population density ratios and smaller communities are less significant.

In addition, Sher pointed to the following three lessons that emerged from the "urbanization of rural schools"[28]—what he called "a historically significant educational movement" that slowly over the span of one hundred years sought to consolidate, standardize, and centralize rural schools vis-à-vis an ideology of growth, efficiency, and conformity designed to support the nation's rising commitment to industrialism, corporate capitalism, and urban life. Sher recommended we learn from these historical lessons to find more appropriate reform strategies that were sensitive to the social and educational needs of today's American rural children

[26] Ibid., 3.
[27] Ibid., 2.
[28] Ibid., 41.

First, the historical emphasis on efficiency and business management is problematic. By emulating the organizational patterns, curriculum, and standards established in urban and suburban schools, and by adopting urban textbooks, educational standards, and contemporary urban architectural models, and by seeking highly specialized urban-trained teachers, and mimicking consolidation patterns of urban school districts, and by centralizing administrative control, we largely reject the unique character and heritage of many rural areas.

Second, history teaches us that when we transfer control from the local community to hired professionals, the traditional sense of involvement, intimacy, and identification existing between rural parents and their schools becomes diminished. Sher suggests that inaugurating a formalized, standardized, and urbanized educational system weakens the traditional continuity between rural education and rural life. Moreover, by inculcating rural children with urban values, urban aspirations, and urban skills, we encourage out-migration while discouraging the preservation and improvement of traditional rural schools and communities.

In short, for Sher, making rural schools more like urban or suburban ones (and in the process "saving" rural children from their parents and rural parents from themselves) through an ideology of growth, efficiency, and conformity, is antithecal to the meaning of rural life. Policy making that tends to be far removed from the particular problems, circumstances, and socioeconomic contexts of rural areas, diminishes the continuity between rural life and rural education, resulting in tensions and resistance.

Nachtigal suggests that urban and suburban schools should emulate the inherent strengths and qualities of smaller rural schools. Rural schools were seen more personal;

as an integral part of the community aimed at serving small groups of people. Rural teachers were viewed as more versatile and accommodating as they worked within school buildings that were also just as flexible at providing multiple services to the students and to the community. Rural school administrators were seen as more willing to enable teachers, parents, and students to participate in policy making and as advocating operational plans and organizational plans that were accommodating to local and particular circumstances.

Paradoxically, the virtues of rural areas such as small size and lack of specialization were viewed as specific weaknesses by the Reagan administration's influential document, *A Nation at Risk*. The lengthy manuscript claimed to reflect the growing alarm of the U. S. government, the military, and big business with the nation's lack of basic reading, writing, spelling and computation skills .[29] Proponents decried the need to increase American student achievement on a par with other industrialized nations and among other things, pushed for strengthening high school graduation requirements so that "at a minimum all students seeking a diploma be required to lay the foundations in the Five New Basics."[30] As a result of *A Nation at Risk,* teacher education programs came under fire and considerable energy was directed toward improving them. A growing body of research suggested that more attention was needed to focus on the unique roles and responsibilities school personnel would face in rural and small schools such as enabling teachers to be generalists first and specialists second.[31]

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[29] National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).
[30] Ibid., p. 24.
[31] Ted Sizer *Horace's School*; Jerry G. Horn, *Recruitment and Preparation of Quality Teachers for Rural Schools (*A paper prepared for the U.S. Department of Education Forum, Kansas City, Missouri, 1985.)

Although folks in the eighties and especially those influenced by *A Nation at Risk* may have viewed rural schools as out of touch by contemporary society, by the nineties rural schools were portrayed as having unique opportunities for reform. According to Gibbs, an economist with the Food and Rural Economics Division of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, a "rural renaissance" in the nineties refocused attention on rural schools.[32] He argued that the structure and characteristics of many rural schools create an atmosphere conducive to school improvement including low student-teacher ratios, individualized instruction and attention, cooperative learning opportunities, close relationships and ties to the community, and strong staff commitment.

Gibbs also found that although perceptions of America's rural schools have vastly improved since the early nineties there are still significant gaps between rural schools and their urban and suburban counterparts.[33] For example, a disparity remains between teachers' salaries and qualifications. Urban salaries are about 21% higher for starting teachers and 35% higher for teachers with masters' degrees and 20 or more years of experience. Since experience is typically rewarded more in urban and suburban schools than in rural schools, there is an increasing salary disparity with age. Lower pay for experienced teachers in rural schools may play a role in teacher quality, which lags by some measures. Teachers in rural schools are younger on average and have less experience. Compensating factors that can allow rural schools to retain teachers at age 25 or 30 are less effective for 45 year-olds in the face of large urban-rural salary differences or opportunities in better-paying professions. About a third of rural teachers have graduate degrees while nearly half of urban teachers do. Further, 8% of rural have

[32] R. M. Gibbs, "The Challenge Ahead for Rural Schools." p. 82.
[33] R. M. Gibbs, "The Challenge Ahead for Rural Schools."

graduated from top-ranked colleges or universities while 15% of urban ones graduated from more selective colleges.

Gibbs identified four factors that affect college attendance among rural students: 1) family traits; 2) community factors; 3) wage structures of labor markets; and 4) the existence of college campuses in the vicinity.[34] On average, rural families have lower incomes and less wealth than urban and suburban families. Consequently, rural families are less able to afford college, although they may compensate by sending their children to less expensive, and often less prestigious, public colleges. The parents of rural students are also less likely to have a college education themselves—a well established predictor of college attendance.

Socio-economic conditions of the local community affect students' perceptions of the value of a college degree, expectations about their work life, and the decisions they make about education. A local economy with few high-education jobs offers few role models and little exposure to high skill occupations. Moreover, according to Gibbs, eighty percent of rural residents live in counties where less than 15 percent of the adult population has a bachelor's degree; this is true for only 21 percent of urban residents.

The wage structure of many rural labor markets is the third significant factor in persuading rural youth to attend college according to Gibbs. Since the monetary returns to a college degree are typically much lower in rural labor markets, rural students may underestimate the benefits of a college education and choose immediate employment instead. And even though the labor market for rural youths theoretically extends beyond

[34] R. M. Gibbs, "The Challenge Ahead for Rural Schools."

their local boundaries, information about local conditions is much easier to obtain and therefore exerts a large influence.

Finally, roughly half of rural high school students live in counties that have no colleges, compared with a tenth of all urban students. Consequently, the average rural teenager is less familiar with the social and cultural enrichment and the encouragement to continue in education that a college and its faculty bring to the community.

Challenges in the South

In an investigation of education in the South before and during the Reconstruction Era, W.E.B. Du Bois, discussed feelings of inferiority among poor whites and freed blacks. He noted, "Usually with a protective psychology, such degraded masses regard ignorance as natural and necessary, or even exalt their own traditional wisdom and discipline over 'book learning'; or they assume that knowledge is for higher beings, and not for the 'likes of us.'" [35] Before the American Civil War, white southern laborers regarded education as a luxury connected with wealth and did not demand formal education. Indeed, most saw no need of it because they looked for escape from their condition only to the possibility of becoming slave owners themselves.

During Reconstruction, Du Bois noted, "If the planters opposed schools for poor whites, they all the more regarded Negro schools as absurd."[36] So early resistance to formal education by both the oppressors and the oppressed themselves contributed to the attitude of property owners, who, under no circumstances, wished to be taxed for the public education of the laboring class. After all, *they didn't need* an education, which

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[35] W.E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880: An Essay toward a History of the Part, which Black Folk Played in an Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America 1860-1880* (New York: Atheneum, 1935). 638.
[36] Ibid., 641.

would only make exploiting them more difficult, and besides, if they were *really worth educating* they would somehow escape their condition by their own efforts. Although Du Bois was describing individuals of the nineteenth century, in many ways the notion that "higher education is not for the likes of us" is still a powerful mind-set among the working class poor in rural areas of the southeastern United States. Moreover, entrenched attitudes regarding low educational expectations for the children of the working class poor in this region are perpetuated by school personnel, state government officials and often the parents themselves.

Patterns of Resistance within START UP

The researcher's immediate concern is enabling the participants of the school university partnership to work more effectively together for the children's benefit so that funding can be extended beyond the five year mark. The phenomenon of the resistance on the part of the school district and reasons why the resistance occurs as well as strategies to alleviate some of the anxiety and frustration of the folks involved in this partnership is critical if the START UP grant is to be sustained in this rural community in the future.

The Magnolia school district resists the forms of domination imposed upon them by the rules and regulations of the grant such as standardized tests, planned curriculum that is aligned with set South Carolina standards for math and science, organized classroom implementation of lesson plans on Saturdays, maintaining student attendance, and providing data on student achievement and promotion. Their resistance to these rules and regulations gets played out in the form of passive aggressive behavior. For example, they forget to respond to a phone call or an email, they neglect to sign an important form

or contract that is due, or the claim to have mailed a package of materials that never arrive to their destination. The school community clearly "read" the cultural implications that the S. C. accountability police's "school report cards" perpetuate through the media—Magnolia's schools are failing and inadequate, Magnolia's teachers are not qualified and burnt out, Magnolia's children are lazy and need to try harder, Magnolia's parents and guardians are unfit and *laissez faire*. As a result, they rebel. They are tired of getting beat up in the media, tired of being labeled "underperforming," tired of the struggle to compete, and tired of the constant pressure of being compared to their urban and suburban counterparts.

Foucault's concept of archeology of knowledge is also useful in understanding the rural South and its historical race, class and gender relationships.[37] The idea of uncovering layers of southern civilization demonstrates the systems of stability and instability in southern thought and southern discourse that contribute to the resistance of marginalized rural groups. As historian C. Vann Woodward declared, "The South's distinctive collective experience of the past . . .[is] the true source of southern identity.[38]

There is a "rebel spirit" in Magnolia and a history of resistance to authority. In the twentieth century Magnolia County became a major tobacco growing region. Antebellum South Carolina was ruled by a blue-blooded aristocracy who claimed lineage to ancestry in England. Managing the bodies on the plantations—rendering them docile, useful, and productive—took a certain talent. In the nineteenth capitalist and agrarian economy, people staked claims to power by reference to ancient lineage and by how much wealth they possessed and could leave to successive generations. Reproducing this

[37] Michel Foucault, Archeology of Knowledge, 1982

wealth became very important to the new ruling bourgeoisie class. Power circulated in the Antebellum South—masters and slaves, men and women, rich and poor, white and black—as did resistance to it. The universal all encircling power escaped no one as productive, docile, useful bodies were constructed. This discipline can be seen in a range of programs taking place beginning in the nineteenth century institutional life where training is provided to produce the obedient subjects. Habits, rules, orders, authority is exercised continually around people so that they function automatically. Rural schools are a good example because they are much more than depositories for academic learning; they are the site for classification, division, and hierarchization. Classrooms resemble a microcosm the principles of normalization.

Most of the parents and guardians of the children in our START UP program are not in a position to afford college tuition and because the large majority do not have a college education themselves, they also lack the cultural capital necessary to familiarize their children with the myriad educational opportunities available and the necessary skills and tools it takes to gain access to college.

Not only are Magnolia's children rarely exposed to family members who have been to college, they also lack role models within the community who work in high tech jobs that might require a college degree. Consequently, Magnolia's students often seek immediate employment instead of college so that they can contribute to their family's income. Information about local jobs on the local posh tourist beach are readily accessible and therefore exert a large influence over students' decisions to go to work right out of high school.

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[38] Cited in David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002) p. 12.

Lastly, the nearest college campus to our START UP students is an expensive, private school and therefore, not easily within reach of the local working class community. Not only are students rarely exposed to individuals in the community who have college degrees, they are not familiar with college campuses and therefore, mystified by the entire college experience.

Many of our seventh grade START UP students have been socialized toward docility, fatalism, and a negative self-image and so they are unlikely to challenge the political and economic order. Some suggest that the State of South Carolina's rural decline began in the twenties when boll weevils ravaged cotton crops and prices plunged for the cotton that survived. Others argue that the downward spiral has its roots in the nineteenth century. Before 1860, South Carolina was one of the richest states in the nation—the wealth was based on slavery and the slaves not only gave the land its inflated value but also were themselves "wealth." With emancipation the entire state was impoverished and as it fought to recover, it still depended on the labor-intensive economy that required a minimal education.

So, in essence, that is what the state of South Carolina has historically provided its citizens—at best, a basic education. This was not seriously addressed until 1998 when people realized that businesses geared to more sophisticated production and that South Carolina was not prepared to produce enough skilled laborers to fill the knowledge based and high tech jobs in industry. In schools, the old BSAP (Basic Skills and Performance Test) was replaced with the new PACT (Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test) that emphasized higher-order thinking skills and more advanced subject matter.

Still, rural South Carolina lags behind more prosperous urban and suburban counterparts with a significant number of poor people (poor health, poor jobs, poorly educated)—Black, White, and increasingly Mexican American and Cuban American. Magnolia County is a rural area that has limited jobs, few skilled workers, little or no economic development, poor infrastructure, and struggling schools. Generations of low educational expectations for the rural poor have contributed to a widespread attitude among residents that "higher education is not for the likes of us" and/or the university is the domain of "rich white folks." Residents who do manage to get a college education (the so-called "best and brightest" often leave and never return, taking jobs in more prosperous counties.

Consolidation of school districts is one of the recent trends in this country recommended to reduce administrative overhead, bring about uniformity, and cut costs given scare resources. Paradoxically, consolidation has some of the same impact as racial integration had which is a loss of both community institutions and a sense of community and ownership (which research shows is vitally important).

Integration is still viewed by many rural southern blacks as a big trade off and the effects are well documented in the literature on southern schools. Many black schools lost their identity and their sense of community when their schools were integrated. From time to time the by-products of integration are manifested in the voices of Magnolia teachers and students. For example, when the state determined that there was a duplication of services and administrative personnel which needed to be cut so that more money would go directly to the children of Magnolia County and the idea was broached that Magnolia School District 3 and Magnolia School District 4 would need to

consolidate into Magnolia School District 8, one teacher, whom I shall refer to in this paper as Ms. Smyth, declared "This will never work, we're rivals!" On the surface, Smyth's comment could be dismissed as a mere parochial prioritizing of school mascots over academics and the needs of the children. But her comment that the two districts were "rivals" goes much deeper and reflects not only a call for turf protection but also a lost sense of community identity that in part is formed through competitive school sports such as football and basketball.

Paradoxically, Magnolia District 8 is so rurally isolated one could also speculate that this merger is one of the last vestiges of segregation. Other isolated rural counties in South Carolina have merged multiple districts that are predominantly black as well, which begs the question, are these school districts being carved out to isolate black populaces? It may seem to many Magnolia residents that elites are perpetuating their control and the unspoken issue may be a trade-off between less control and resources for a "sense of community."

The socio-political situation in this isolated rurally geographical county has historically seen elites in power; therefore it is not surprising that the County of Magnolia in general has a history of resisting the outside influences of the state and the federal government. The paradox is that there is a strong belief within the local community that they have control over their schools, but because the small communities of Francis and Centennial within the county do not have individual tax bases large enough to support their school district most important decisions such as district consolidation, hiring of administrators and teachers, and other budget matters are made outside of the community by government officials.

Although they do not have control of the budget, the school community including administrators, teachers, parents and students struggle for control in small ways. For example, the main high school within Magnolia School District 8 has had 13 different principals in 14 years. Strong leaders that come from the outside into Magnolia community are immediately labeled as "outsiders" and are rejected by the school community, despite any good ideas and intensions they may have. In this way the community exercises a small bit of control by "resisting" administrators that are appointed by outside governing bodies. This resistance gets played out through inertia, apathy, or disinterest. In some cases teachers with long tenure flat out refuse to cooperate with the new principal and this behavior gets perpetuated through informal factions and coalitions of parents and teachers making it hard for outsiders to gain a foothold.

Conclusion

Two decades of rural school reform mandates since *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (e.g., high school course requirements, staff training, special needs students, and school organization) have led to increased fiscal resources for rural schools. On the one hand, it is unproductive to provide federal and state dollars with either no accountability measures or accountability measures that are so lenient no one takes them seriously. On the other hand, bringing in federal programs with hordes of rules and regulations is not a partnership program, it is a welfare program. In either case they lead to an entitlement culture among the recipients of the funds. In our situation, Magnolia school administrators over the years have learned to expect financial aid without fiscal responsibility. When they learned of the accountability measures required by the START UP grant, they did not take them seriously. In fact, they reacted in a way that indicated to

us that they would prefer to be given the START UP dollars and control the implementation of START UP (their implication was that the money would go into the general budget and if there was any left over, a START UP program would be put into place).

But, the accountability measures put in place by the federal government to ensure that START UP dollars were used for the specific implementation of START UP that were designed to reinforce science, math and language arts skills in 7th grade students, prohibited the principal investigators of the grant from handing the money ($200,000) directly over to the Magnolia District 8 administrators. Personnel were put in place (as a sort of watch dog) to facilitate the START UP grant and to provide the necessary data to the Departments of Education required for accountability and sustained funding. Clearly, the resistance by administrators that we encountered to our START UP partnership then is partially linked to the financial aid that had been provided over the past two decades and that was not as tightly tied to accountability measures as the START UP dollars are.

Finally, the recent buzz word in the G.W. Bush "No Child left Behind Act" is that "all children can learn." Within this accepted paradigm, the Magnolia schools are open to innovations as long as the innovations are on their terms. For example, administrators and teachers have made it clear that they believe that START UP is but one of the innovations that is helping their kids. In other words, they wish to make it very clear that it is not START UP itself that is solely responsible for any gains they may have made in standardized test scores and student promotion to higher grade levels over the past three years.

In the case of my START UP program, the decision-making power is held by a collection of politicians, lawyers, government officials, and highly placed administrators within South Carolina education. As a result, the people with the highest stake in the outcome—parents/guardians, students, teachers, and principals—do not see themselves as: 1) having any level of control and authority; 2) benefiting from the reform; and 3) full and equal partners in the decision making process. Their frustrations often get played out in the form of resistance to power, which is detrimental to the program and to the children's futures.

If we do not want our rural schools to end up serving political and economic interests, then we need to understand that the central problem to rural school reform programs such as START UP is determining the best interests of rural children. Of course there are no simple solutions to this problem. Conflict may be a necessary and sufficient condition for attaining a more democratic, effective, child-oriented system of education. "Complete consensus is usually achieved only on trivial matters; on issues of great importance, conflict is likely."[39] As Piet Hein observed, "Problems worthy of attack show their worth by fighting back."[40]

[39] J. Sher. "Bringing Home the Bacon." p. 283.
[40] Ibid., p. 283.

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Signature: Susan Schramm-Pate	Printed Name/Position/Title: SUSAN Schramm-Pate, Assist. Professor
Organization/Address: University of S.C College of Ed Columbia, SC 29208	Telephone: 803 777-3087 FAX: 777-3090 E Mail Address: schramm2@gwm.sc.edu Date: